



Iraq liberation third year anniversary

Story by Spc. Brian Anderson

MNC-I PAO

Sunday marked the three-year anniversary of the beginning of the liberation of Iraq.

On March 19, 2003, the United States along with Coalition Forces entered Iraq with the intent to end a brutal dictatorship, and according to President George W.

Bush, it was the right decision.

"America and the world are safer today without Saddam Hussein in power," Bush said during his weekly radio address Saturday. "He is no longer oppressing the Iraqi people, sponsoring terror, and threatening the world."

Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq has made several steps in the rebuilding process to include the democratic

election of an Iraqi government, development of an Iraqi constitution, restoration of Iraq's infrastructure beyond pre-war levels and the establishment of an increasingly effective Iraqi Security Force.

Although Iraq is currently headed in the right direction, there are still many obstacles to overcome.

"Even though

Coalition forces have increased their support structures and standards of living, the "bad guys" seem to have established a more commanding impact on the battlefield, said Maj. Robert S. Hookness Jr., chief, programs, MNC-I. "Troops don't just drive from Baghdad International Airport to Balad anymore. They have to move in heavily armored, heavily guarded convoys or better yet, they fly. The "bad guys" have also shifted focus away from a purely insurgent focus on "enemy" troops and begun targeting other Iraqis."

Capt. Mike Forbes', operations, Iraq assistance Group, thoughts were similar to Hookness.

"The insurgency has matured, so the security situation hasn't improved since OIF I," said Forbes, who was here during OIF1 and is here again for OIF 3. "However, the Iraqi Security Forces have also significantly matured since the days of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps and Iraqi National Guard."

Forbes said his impression of the Iraqi Security Forces has changed.

"Last time, I had a pretty low opinion of the Iraqi Police, Border Police, and ICDC,"

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Reuters

A U.S. Army M1A1 Abrams Tank fires on an enemy position while moving through the Iraqi desert during the initial ground assault three years ago.

Camp Victory Three-day forecast

Wednesday



Sunny
High: 83 F
Low: 55 F

Thursday



Sunny
High: 83 F
Low: 58 F

Friday



Sunny
High: 86 F
Low: 58 F

In today's Victory Times:

Page 2: Civil affairs supply basic needs, Griffin visits Iraq

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Civil affairs supplies Iraqis basic needs

Story and photos by Spc.
James P. Hunter
MNC-I PAO

Soldiers from Company A, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, distributed approximately 100 blankets, 50 hygiene kits and a box of soccer balls to Iraqi families within a residential area during a humanitarian assistance mission in Karkh Saturday.

Nearly three months ago, a rocket was fired at a building within the International Zone in central Baghdad. The rocket misfired though, hit the residential area and destroyed many homes.

Initially, Coalition Forces went into the area following the attack, distributing clothing, food and water. They did not have enough materials to distribute to the entire area, so Soldiers followed-up with Saturday's mission.

When the U.S. Soldiers arrived, the Karkh District

Council members directed the Soldiers to place the items in a certain location. The troops took a step back, pulled security and watched while the council handed the humanitarian aid to their fellow Iraqis.

Abdul Satar Alrobeaee, chairman, Karkh District Council, said the area is very poor and his people need these supplies to get by in their everyday life. Alongside U.S. Forces, he helped to distribute the necessities to his people.

The only thing the chairman expects in return for his efforts is a national government united into one family.

"The key is wanting to do everything for the Iraqis," said Capt. Scott Ginsburg, team leader, Co. A, 425th CA Bn. "It's not about us. It's about helping the Iraqi people and getting their government involved."

Ginsburg said the mission is important because it helps legitimize the Karkh District Council.



A Karkh District Council member passes out blankets to Iraqi families Saturday. Company A, 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, traveled to Karkh to distribute items to Iraqis because of the devastation of a rocket attack.

"People come to them with a need," he said. "So if we can assist (the council) and supply them, then their people are going to have more respect for their government."

A Civil Affairs Soldier's job is to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Wyatt, team sergeant, Co. A, 425th CA Bn.

Although the council did not provide the Iraqis with these

necessities, by just taking part in the process, it tells the Iraqi people that their government cares about what happens within their neighborhoods, and, explained Wyatt, the local leaders are being proactive in resolving the issues many Iraqis face.

"As long as you give them the chance, they will play a greater role in the mission," Ginsburg said.

Kathy Griffin, friends "Fire at Will"

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Drew
Hendricks
MNC-I PAO

It was standing room only at the Camp Victory stage March 19th as servicemembers gathered to spend an evening watching comedian Kathy Griffin "Fire At Will."

Griffin, known to many as Vickie Groener, Brooke Shields' acerbic colleague on the "Suddenly Susan Show," and more recently on Bravo Channel's "Kathy Griffin: My life on the D-List," gave the audience a break from their day-to-day routine.

Along with Griffin was Michael McDonald, most popular for his character Stuart on "MAD TV" and Karri Turner, who plays Lt. Harriet Sims-Roberts on TV's "JAG."

The tour, presented by Armed Forces Entertainment, gave the stars a chance to

bring some humor to troops based at Camps Stryker, Liberty and Victory.

This is Griffin's second tour in the Middle East. She performed in Kuwait, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in 2002.

But it is not just about coming out to entertain the troops, Griffin says she enjoys just meeting and hearing a little about the servicemembers and their life in Iraq.

"I like to hear other people's stories,



Kathy Griffin, Michael McDonald and Karri Turner meet with servicemembers before they took the stage, Monday. The trio signed autographs, took pictures with, and thanked the troops for all they do.

about what they've seen and what they think," said Griffin.

See COMEDY, page 4

Chaplain's Corner

Is your life banal?

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) David Koch

I have a question for you. What is banal in your lives? What is or has become common, ordinary, everyday, seen but ignored, used but not appreciated, touched but overlooked. Essentially, what have you taken for granted?

As I type this on my computer, I cannot help but remember my first computer. It had a monitor that was monochrome black with a green screen, a dot matrix printer and a hard drive that was 20 megabytes, I was wondering how I would ever fill it, and a floppy disk to back up my files, which would take about 30-60 minutes. The whole thing cost me \$2,400.

What do you take for granted – family, spouse, children, home, car, or maybe something else? I know here in Iraq, I have come to appreciate a good shower and I miss the squeaky clean feeling at the end of the shower. I miss not having a certain lady back home, since I am single. And I guess I miss the freedom of my car, to get up and go.

I truly miss my folks, Mom and Stepfather, Jake. Mom is 86 years old (although you would never know it). Jake is 83 years old. She still fixes two hot meals a day, breakfast and lunch for two, and they will have a drink with snacks watching the evening news. And thank you Lord, they are just as cantankerous as ever.

He, being a southern boy from Louisiana – and graduate of

LSU, well, we have had our differences. We have learned the land mine subjects to avoid, and have learned to respect each other's view points, even when they are wrong.

Mom, well she is Scotch-Irish from Minneapolis, Minn. My biological Dad, William J. Koch, from Pottsgrove, Pa., was Pennsylvania Dutch so, I guess that makes me a Heinz 57 variety guy, right? Mom taught me time and again how to "make nice," with everyone because the results are generally better in the long run.

Back to the original question, what has become so banal, so commonplace in your lives that you no longer see or appreciate them, or for that matter care much about them any more? Open your eyes, my friend! In Christ's eye witness the account of Lazarus and the rich man. The overwhelming reason the rich man went to hell was because he no longer saw Lazarus at his feet, and more importantly, he no longer cared. The story of this can be found in read in Luke 16.

What has become common place where you are? Maybe it is the young specialist or sergeant who, day in and out, quietly gets the job done. Maybe it is the civilian who is indispensable because of the knowledge and professionalism she displays. Maybe it is your spouse back home taking care of things, keeping the home fires burning. Maybe it is your kids who, on occasion, can be so frustrating. But when they do something right, and listen to you, it makes up for all the frustration!

So, what has become banal for you – but should not be?



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IRAQ

Forbes said. "They were poorly trained, ill-equipped, and plagued with corruption. The ISF today is completely different from what it was in OIF I, and while they still have a long way to go, they are light-years ahead of their predecessors."

The changes in Iraq's Security Forces and Army are not the only changes; the infrastructure and government have also made great strides over the past three years.

"Iraqi facilities are run by Iraqis. It sounds funny but when I was here during OIF I, most companies were closed," said Sgt. Steven Neal, C Battery, 2nd Battalion, 5th Field Artillery. "We put a lot of individuals to work, and now, Iraqis have taken ownership of their companies and most, as far as I can tell, are independently run."

"Iraq is definitely more established," said Sgt. Christopher Prescott, C Btry., 2nd Bn., 5th FA.

From the built up forward operating bases being established

to the improved roads, from creating their own government and voting to having contracts with Iraqi Truck Companies to assisting military convoys, you can tell Iraq has come a long way, Prescott continued.

Although it

has only been three years, Iraq has made several large steps, and Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, commanding general, Multi-National Corps-Iraq, is working hard to keep the progression, ensuring the Iraqis have a brighter future.

"We are providing police training teams and unit partnerships and mentoring to help develop the capability of the police force, much as we have with the Army and we are working with the Iraqi government to assist in building ministerial capacities so that the government can provide the necessary essential services for all Iraqis," said Chiarelli.

"We are (also) developing provincial reconstruction teams to work with provincial governments in developing economic systems and building infrastructure so that the Iraqis can have clean water, electricity, fuel, proper sewage systems and trash removal.

"All of these non-kinetic aspects are being worked simultaneously to move Iraq forward as a country," Chiarelli continued.

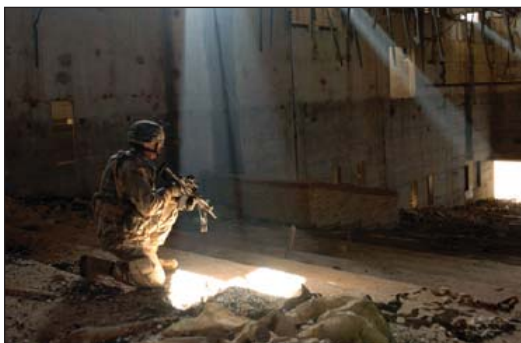
There is still a long road ahead, but the signs of progression are easy to see.

"Our mission and presence in Iraq is crucial to stability in the country and the region," said Hookness. "I am more convinced that the Iraqis are willing to take the risks to stand on their own two feet and are doing a great job for an infant administration. I truly can't believe how far they have come in the last (three) years."



U.S. Navy photo by Lt. j.g. Scott Timmester

An F-14D Tomcat, assigned to the "Blacklions" of Fighter Squadron Two One Three, conducts a mission over Northern Iraq. VF-213 is assigned to Carrier Air Wing Eight, currently embarked aboard the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt.



U.S. Navy photo

U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Amos Fox, fire support officer, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, secures a building in a weapons compound in Hateen, Iraq, while providing security for the Ashurah pilgrims that will be passing through to Karbala.

COMEDY

"I love performing for the troops, when I hear someone come up to me and hear them tell me 'That's the first time I've laughed in a long time,' or even 'I appreciate you for doing this,' makes this worthwhile," said Griffin.

Griffin held nothing back bringing the troops up-to-date with the current Hollywood gossip.

Rolling with laughter, the troops were introduced to the co-stars of the show, but not without Griffin egging the audience to

convince Michael McDonald to perform a bit of Stuart.

As the audience cheered, McDonald transformed into the lovable character he plays on TV.

After an hour and a half of standup comedy and improvisational acts, the trio thanked the audience for their service and gave Soldiers a chance to get autographs and take a few pictures with them. The line went out the door of



Kathy Griffin picks a Soldier from the audience to be a part of the improvisation act during her tour at Camp Victory, Sunday.

the gym and down the sidewalk as hundreds waited to meet the stars.

"That was a great turn out, it must have been our biggest crowd," said Griffin.

The line seemed to go on forever, but the stars kept right on signing and smiling. The last fan filed through at midnight allowing the stars to end their night and their tour.

"It was great to come out and support the troops," said Griffin. "We would love to come back anytime you'll have us."

Letters from home

Private First Class Gabe A. Garcia, 165th Military Police Company, 3rd Platoon, "Freedom Is Not Free." As your grandfather (WW II), your dad (Vietnam), your older brother (Desert Storm) , and now you (Iraqi Freedom). We are proud of you. Be safe.
Love, Dad and Mom.

Operating hours

Coalition Cafe

Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5:30 - 8 p.m.
Midnight Dining 11 p.m. - 1 a.m.

Sports Oasis

Breakfast 5:30 - 8:30 a.m.
Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Dinner 5:30 - 9 p.m.

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Camp Liberty Post Exchange

Everyday 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.

Fitness Center

Open 24 Hours

Post Office

Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday - 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday 1 - 5 p.m.

Golby Troop Medical Clinic

Sick Call Hours:

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon
Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. - noon

Dental Sick Call:

Monday - Friday 7:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Saturday 9 - 10:30 a.m.

Mental Health Clinic:

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - noon

Post Deployment Health Briefings:

Monday - Friday 1 p.m.

Pharmacy:

Monday - Friday 7:30 a.m. - noon, 1 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday 7:30 a.m. - noon

Legal Assistance/Claims

Saturday - Thursday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Friday 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Personnel Service Support Centers

Monday - Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

ID Cards

Monday - Friday
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



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CONTACT INFORMATION: For information or to sign up for March's tournaments call or email:

Sgt. Joseph Mahoney
DSN: 822-2065
joseph.mahoney@iraq.centcom.mil

TOURNAMENT RULES: basic rules are included w/ this email



TIME: 8 p.m. **PLACE:** MWR Bldg. 124

TOURNAMENT DATES:

March 27

April 10 and 24

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POSH training (7 p.m. - 8 p.m.) & SAPR training (8 p.m. - 9 p.m.)

For more information contact SFC Chris Baldur @ DSN 822-3532

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For more information contact Sgt. 1st Class Chris Baldur, DSN 822-3545

Worship Opportunities

Victory Chapel (Bldg. 31)

Sunday:

Traditional Protestant Service 7 and 8:45 a.m.
Roman Catholic Confession 10 a.m.
Roman Catholic Mass 10:30 a.m.
Gospel Protestant Service noon
Latter Day Saints Service 2 p.m.
Episcopal/Lutheran Service 4 p.m.
Contemporary Protestant Service 6 p.m.

Saturday:

7th Day Adventist Service 11 a.m.
Roman Catholic Mass 8 p.m.

Mini-Chapel (Bldg. 2)

Monday - Friday

Roman Catholic Service 4 p.m.

Friday:

Jewish Service 6:30 p.m.

Saturday:

Orthodox:

Orthodox Vespers 5 p.m.
Orthodox Confession 6:30 p.m.
Orthodox Bible Study 7 p.m.

Sunday:

Orthodox Divine Liturgy 9 p.m.

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Submit letters from home

Is your loved one deployed in support of Multi-National Corps-Iraq? Would you like to write him or her a message in the Victory Times? Send messages, three to four lines of text to brian.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil. Ensure to include Soldiers name, rank, and unit.

Victory Times welcomes columns, commentaries, articles and letters from our readers. Send submissions or comments to brian.anderson@iraq.centcom.mil.

We reserve the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, policy, clarity and space.

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